

WTO Public Forum 2021

Building better together: Towards resilient trade policy and multilateral trading system

29 September, 2021

1130-1230 CEST (3pm-4pm IST)

- **The adverse spillovers from the pandemic-induced health crisis have had severe economic impacts.**
- **Governments across the world have seen their revenues and budgets shrink due to the pandemic response efforts and the economic collapse. At the same time, they are going back to “tax more, spend more” regime, which was dominant during three decades post World War 2. The need of the hour is a large-scale reconstruction plan like the post-WW2 Marshall Plan, and instruments like a Tobin Tax to raise revenue.**
- **Trade is going to be an important instrument in building back better. The WTO needs to play its part to ensure predictability and stability in the trading system. A reformed WTO dispute settlement mechanism and a robust monitoring function through its committees, the so-called missing middle, are even more imperative in the post-pandemic scenario.**
- **The reliance of global supply chains on China became evident when the pandemic first hit, and by early 2020 there were major disruptions in supply chains.**

- **As laid out in an UNCTAD report from 2020 (*The Covid-19 Shock to Developing Countries*), firms have begun to rethink their business models and go in for “shortening” of supply chains – to include fewer links in these chains and increase links that are closer to home. A “China-plus-one” strategy of supply chain diversification has also become important in this regard.**

Questions for Panel Discussion

- 1. Can we expect any forward movement and any outcome on AB reform at MC12? Is the EU working with the US on any joint proposal to resolve the AB stalemate? [Anders Ahnlid]**
- 2. In the absence of a functioning dispute settlement system, is there any incentive for WTO members to even attempt to modernise the rulebook? [Anders Ahnlid]**
- 3. The various proposals for AB reform made by WTO Members focus on legal amendments to the Dispute Settlement Understanding (DSU). How far can a legalistic approach help solve an essentially political challenge? [Juliana Peixoto Batista]**
- 4. What role can the middle powers in the WTO play towards bridging differences and moving forward on AB reform? [Juliana Peixoto Batista]**
- 5. Is it fair on the part of the US to mix the issue of the Appellate Body’s working with the larger WTO reform agenda? [Stephen Olson]**

6. The US has already identified its areas of concern about the functioning of the Appellate Body. Why does it remain reluctant to engage on the way forward to find solutions? [Stephen Olson]